DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 236 477 CG 017 027

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TITLE Rural Minority Adolescents: New Focus in Career Counseling.
PUB DATE Mar 83
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Personnel and Guidance Association (Washington, DC, March 20-23, 1983).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; American Indians; Blacks; *Career Counseling; *Career Development; Employment Opportunities; Industrialization; *Minority Groups; *Rural Areas; *Rural Youth; Secondary Education; Vocational Education

ABSTRACT

While more new industrial jobs have been created in rural areas than in metropolitan centers in the last two decades, both white and minority rural workers lag behind their urban counterparts in vocational development. Since this rural labor force is composed mainly of the poor who have little schooling, formal skill training, or on-the-job training, they are generally hired for low-paying jobs. Thus, a need exists to improve vocational counseling for rural adolescents. This paper presents six suggestions for improving career counseling efforts for rural minority youths, based on a study of the career development of Black and Indian youths (N=800) from five rural counties in North Carolina. The recommendations are: (1) link career counseling for minority youths to economic and industrial development in rural areas, e.g., facilitating understanding of "high tech" occupational opportunities; (2) promote the upgrading of math and science education for minorities, possibly through use of consultation with new industries; (3) involve parents in career counseling; (4) emphasize minority female career development, e.g., advocate equal participation in rural "high tech" opportunities; (5) counsel for rural minority entrepreneurship, emphasizing formal experiences in entrepreneurial development; and (6) provide greater access to career counseling for rural minority youths. (WAS)

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Rural Minority Adolescents: New Focus in Career Counseling

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CG 017027

Paper presented at the American Personnel and Guidance Association Convention, Washington, D.C.

March 1983

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Rural Minority Adolescents: New Focus in Career Counseling

INTRODUCTION

Vocational psychologists and educators have begun to focus attention on the vocational development of adolescents. Signficantly, much of this focus has been on the career development of urban youth. This seems to imply that vocational development only occurs with youth in urban environments.

There are however, thousands of adolescents residing in rural America whose vocational development has not been accorded nearly as much attention. Such consideration seems critical given the fact that during the last two decades, more new industrial jobs have been created in rural areas than in metropolitan centers. This reverses the previous historical trend of concentrating industrial expansion in or near cities and has been concomitant with the demographic turnaround whereby rural America has experienced faster population growth than urban areas (Lonsdale & Seyler, 1979). With respect to this however, figures on labor force activities in rural areas indicate that both white and minority workers lag behind their urban counterparts in vocational development (Marshall, 1972; Fratoe, 1980). This rural labor force is composed mainly of the poor who have received relatively little schooling, formal skill training, or on-the-job training (Walker, 1977). Therefore, when industrialization takes place in rural areas, indigenous workers are usually hired for low-paying unskilled or semi-skilled jobs, while better paying positions have gone to in-migrants (Summers, 1975).

Rural industrialization brings with it then, the need to improve local labor force quality by facilitating the vocational development of people already in the work force as well as those who will enter it. With regard to rural adolescents therefore, facilitating vocational development implies a need to

improve counseling so that these youth will be assisted in making an orderly transition from secondary school to post secondary school career opportunities in the contemporary rural milieu (Sher, 1979). Facilitating vocational development for rural youth seems especially important since the adolescent years have been characterised as a period of occupational exploration and tenative career choice. (Super, 1953; Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrod & Herma, 1951; Tiedeman & O'Hara, 1963).

With respect to this then, this paper will present some new directions for contemporary career counseling with rural minority adolescents. It will focus on developing careeer counseling models for Black and Indian youth in rural areas. The ideas which constitute this paper grew out of a study of the career development of 800 junior and senior high school students in five rural counties in Southern and Eastern North Carolina beginning to experience industrialization, that was conducted in the Fall of 1981. The study investigated the psychosocial variables related to the occupational aspirations and expectations of Black and Indian students in these areas.

BACKGROUND

Although the rural North Carolina counties in which our study was conducted are undergoing industrialization, census data (1978, 1980) indicates that they are are some of the poorest in the region. Indeed, a majority of residents are poor, non-white minorities, and live in persistent low income rural areas. Recent unemployment figures for Black and Indian workers have been over 11 percent. An important point to consider is that such data is related to the minority employment scenario in these counties. A scenario characterised by traditions of employment in low-paying and unskilled rural jobs.

Implications for Career Counseling

Given this background on the occupational status of rural Black and Indian people, what can be done to improve career counseling efforts to insure that the next generation of minority workers is assisted in developing the interests and abilities to compete in the changing rural workplace? To provide an answer to this question, this paper will examine six relevant implications which emerged from our research:

1. Link Career Conseling for Minority Youth to Economic and Industrial Development in Rural Areas

Career counseling programs for Black and Indian students in rural schools should be closely linked to contemprary and future development in those areas. Projections are that growth in rural areas will be in the "high tech" fields. Counselors therefore, should facilitate an understanding of emerging rural "high tech" occupational opportunities among minority students. To assist with this counselors need to consult with industries and newly founded rural technical schools about providing experiences for minority youth to explore such opportunities. This is underscored by our research data which suggests that the Black and Indian students in our sample had a high degree of interest in scientific activities and occupations.

2. Promote the Upgrading of Math and Science Education for Minority Students

Counselors need to advocate for an upgrading of science and math education in rural schools for minority students. Again, consultation with new industries may provide an important means for accomplishing this. Three areas might be included in such consultation. First, have "high tech" personnel (preferably minorities) come into schools to teach math and science instruction for students in industrial settings. Second, coordinate on-site math and science instruction

for students in industrial settings. Third, coordinate professional development experiences for math and science teachers by minority industrial personnel. One theme for such experiences might be how to motivate minority youth into math and science careers.

3. Involve Parents in Career Counseling

Any career counseling intervention with minority adolescents should be a partnership between counselors and parents. Significantly our research findings indicated that the influence of parents has a significant impact on the attitudes that Black and Indian students have toward making a career choice, their vocational interests, and aspirations. Counselors therefore, need to consult with parents to make them aware of their influence on vocational development. Counselor-Parent Partnership Models should be developed to devise strategies for improving parental impact on adolescent career focus. Such strategies should include: assisting parents in helping youth use occupational information, helping parents facilitate the development and exploration of "high tech" interests and aptitudes among young people, and helping parents work to dispell racial sterotypes associated with the rural marketplace.

4. Emphasize Minority Female Career Development

Counselor-Parent Intervention Models should develop strategies specifically to enhance the vocational development of Black and Indian girls. Our research data imply that although Black and Indian girls had the same or higher career aspirations as their male counterparts, their actual career expectations were generally lower. This aspiration-expectation discrepancy was greater for females than males. Counselors and parents therefore, need to provide experiences for young women to understand traditional rural sex-role stereotyping and socialization and consider these factors within the context of

personal aspirations related to nontraditional occupations. Along these lines, counselors and parents need to advocate for equal participation in rural "high tech" industrial opportunities by dispelling sexual as well as racial stereotypes.

5. Counsel for Rural Minority Entrepreneurship

Counselors need to facilitate interests and abilities for rural ownership among minority students. The findings from our study suggest that many Black and Indian students aspire to become rural entrepreneurs. Career counseling then should emphasize formal experiences in entrepreneurial development. For example, characteristics of achievement, motivation and creativity can be modeled by having students get involve with minority entrepreneurs in school or through intern or co-operative experiences. Further, counselors can coordinate student involvement in student-run business, church, or community enterprises.

6. Greater Access to Career Counseling

Counselors need to maximize their efforts in facilitating the career development of minority youth by providing them with greater access to counseling. Counselors should encourage greater educational attainment in nontraditional areas on the part of minority youth. An example of this would be encouraging minority students to go into high level math and science courses. Finally, counselors need to take the initiative in coordinating joing efforts by the educational system, government, and private sector to upgrade the career development of minority youth through means mentioned previously.

CONCLUSION

Both economic and human resource advancement are crucial factors in rural industrial development. One goal of economic development is to produce more jobs for rural Americans to increase their income power and furnish greater tax resources for community improvement. With respect to this, an important goal of human resource advancement is to supply the industrial marketplace with trained labor and competent leadership for economic growth. A rural development strategy that is beneficial to Blacks and Indians therefore would have to include not only economic growth, but better vocational preparation for present and future workers. Given the fact that the world of work for many minority people has been landscaped with unfulfilled dreams, wasted potential, dashed hopes and economic struggle, the issue of vocational counseling becomes a complex dimension in the development of Black and Indian adolescents. School counselors however, can play a crucial role in developing strategies that consider the socio-economic pressures on rural minority adolescent vocational development and restructure traditional school counseling accordingly. The future economic and social survival of Black and Indian rural peoples demands no less.

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